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SUBJECT: FIFTH RUSSIAN DUMA TO BEGIN WORK DECEMBER 24

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SUMMARY

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¶1. (U) The fifth Russian Duma will begin its work December 24. Taking seats in the new Duma on behalf of the four winning parties -- United Russia, Communist Party (KPRF), Just Russia, and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) -- will be veteran politicians, youth movement leaders, businessmen and former Olympic athletes. More than a hundred United Russia candidates, including governors and mayors, who are entitled to seats have opted out, choosing instead to remain in their current positions. Their seats will be filled by candidates whose names appeared lower on the regional lists. Among the Duma's first tasks will be electing its leaders and determining the composition of committees. End summary.

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TO SERVE OR NOT TO SERVE

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¶2. (U) When the Duma begins its work on December 24, its 450 party-list seats will be filled by candidates who won their seats because of their position on regional lists or who have benefited from a candidate higher on the list opting not to serve in the Duma. Candidates who were eligible for a seat in the Duma were notified by the Central Election Commission (CEC) via telegram that they had won a seat and had five days to inform the CEC of their intention to serve. One hundred thirteen candidates who were entitled to a seat in the Duma waived this right. One hundred and one were representatives of United Russia. Seven winning candidates on Just Russia's list, two on LDPR's and three on KPRF's also have opted not to serve.

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LOCOMOTIVES STAY PUT

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¶3. (U) Many of those who decided not to take up their Duma "mandates" are governors, mayors and government ministers; the so-called "locomotives" who headed regional party lists in order to garner support for United Russia. Most of these candidates had no intention of serving and the expectation was always that they would be replaced by others whose names appeared lower on the party's list. One exception is the now-former governor of Yaroslavl, Aleksandr Lisitsyn, who was "convinced" into resigning after his region posted a weak showing for United Russia. He will serve in the new Duma.

¶4. (U) The most notable Duma candidate who will not serve is Putin. Although a member of the CEC confirmed in the press that he did not officially notify the CEC of his intention not to occupy his place in the Duma, his seat will be filled by 32-year old Sergey Kapkov of Magadan. Kapkov is head of

the National Soccer Academy that is owned by Chukotka Governor Roman Abramovich. The regions of Magadan and Chukotka were combined into one electoral district due to their small populations. Others who have opted not to serve are Just Russia Chairman Sergey Mironov, who will remain speaker of the Federation Council. Fellow Just Russia member and actor Valeriy Zolotukhin also will not serve in the Duma.

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OLYMPIANS, POLITICIANS, YOUTH AND BUSINESS LEADERS  
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15. (U) United Russia's list of Duma deputies is notable for its large number of former Olympic athletes. Gymnasts Alina Kabayeva and Svetlana Khorkina, hockey goalie Vladislav Tretyak, speed skater Svetlana Zhurova, bi-athlete Svetlana Ishmuratova, and figure skaters Irina Rodnina and Anton Sikharulidze will take seats. They will be joined in the United Russia faction by former press secretary of the Nashi youth movement Robert Shlegel, Young Russia leader Maksim Mishchenko, political expert Sergey Markov and publisher Konstantin Rykov. Business will be represented by former AvtoVaz General Director Igor Yesipovskiy and News Outdoor Russia Manager Sergey Zheleznyak. Although it is difficult to say with certainty the business interests that will be represented in the Duma, the number of business people who serve is likely to be lower than in the previous Duma following Putin's admonition earlier this year that the Duma is not a place for oligarchs. Billionaire Suleiman Karimov took this to heart and withdrew his name from the United Russia list. He has since been given a place in the Federation Council.

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THE FAMOUS AND THE INFAMOUS  
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16. (U) LDPR leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy at a post-election press conference contrasted LDPR's Duma deputies with those of other parties, announcing that his party's 40-member faction will not include "sportsmen, singers or models." Instead, his party will be represented by "businessmen, lawyers and economists" and twice as many women as in the fourth Duma. LDPR's faction will include one of the more infamous Duma candidates. Andrey Lugovoy, under indictment by the British for his involvement in the Litvinenko case, was number two on LDPR's federal list. He is entitled not only to a seat in the new Duma but to the immunity that comes with it.

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KPRF PROTESTS ELECTION RESULTS BUT PREPARES TO BE SEATED  
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17. (U) Leaders of KPRF have continued to protest the results of the elections. On December 20, party leader Gennadiy Zyuganov plans to meet with Rene van der Linden, president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, to explain his party's review of violations of election law and their plans to have the results overturned. According to news reports, the legal service of KPRF is prepared to initiate more than 20 criminal proceedings against members of the CEC and regional officials in four regions (Mordovia, Dagestan, Samara, Stravropol Kray). Despite an earlier threat not to take their 57 seats in the Duma, party members, led by Zyuganov, will join the fifth Duma.

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DUMA TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS  
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18. (U) The December 24 Duma session will be opened by its oldest member, Zhores Alferov, a member of KPRF. The first

order of business will be to elect a speaker and vice-speakers. It is all but certain that Fourth Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov will remain in the position. It is expected that the number of vice-speakers will be increased from 9 to 10. Oleg Kovalev, leader of the working group that is organizing the Duma, announced December 19 that the number of committees will increase from 29 to 32 with the addition of committees on energy, science and technology, youth, construction and land policy, and industry. The Committee on Ecology will be incorporated into the Committee on Natural Resources. Earlier news reports said members of the United Russia faction are expected to chair all but six committees, which they will leave to the other parties. (United Russia claimed all the committee chair positions in the fourth Duma.) Decisions on committee chairs will be made during the first plenary session on December 24. The second plenary will be January 10.

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COMMENT  
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¶9. (SBU) While the composition of the fifth Duma, its members, committees and leaders, has provided fodder for the media and political analysts, the fifth Duma is most likely to continue to play the role of pliant tool for the Kremlin, given United Russia's constitutional majority.

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